



# Touchbase

## June 2013

## Welcome to June's Touchbase



Sharrion Llewellyn, Editor

Hello, I'm Sharrion Llewellyn. I work in the strategic communications team here at DWP and I will be editing Touchbase for the next few months. As usual, I will be ensuring that we keep you up-to-date with the high profile, time sensitive, need to know information every month.

This month sees the national roll-out of new claims for the Personal Independent Payment (PIP). It means that from 10 June people aged 16 to 64 will no longer be able to apply for the Disability Living Allowance (DLA). We outline the claims process for PIP and where you can find more information on the changes.

Also in this edition, Levi Roots, former Dragons' Den applicant and creator of the Reggae Reggae sauce, lends his support to the Government's New Enterprise Allowance. The scheme provides financial support and advice to jobseekers who want to set up their own business.

Six Universal Credit direct payment projects are to be extended for six months so that the support needed by social housing tenants who are moving onto the benefit can be developed further.

We report the wide range of improvements that have been made to the Work Capability Assessment (WCA) as a result of three independent reviews by Professor Malcolm Harrington and looks ahead to a fourth review by Dr Paul Lichfield. We also report on the early stages of the reforms to the benefits appeals system.

And finally, we preview the new Bereavement Support Payment which will be introduced with the Pension's Bill.

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### In this issue

#### Personal Independence Payment rolls-out

Personal Independence Payment is rolled out across Great Britain



#### Scheme for budding entrepreneurs

Dragons' Den star Levi Roots has teamed up with Jobcentre Plus



#### Direct Payment demo projects extended

The UC direct payment demonstration projects extended by six months



#### Improvements to the WCA

DWP continues to roll out improvements to the Work Capability Assessment



#### Appeals process changes

The disputes and appeals process has changed



#### New Bereavement Support Payment

A new Bereavement Support Payment is to be introduced



# Personal Independence Payment rolls-out nationally

Since April, new claims for PIP have been taken and processed in parts of northern England as part of the controlled start of the benefit.

New claims for the Personal Independence Payment (PIP) will now be rolled out across Britain (except for Northern Ireland) from the 10 June 2013.

From then, Disability Living Allowance (DLA) will no longer be available to adults aged 16 to 64.

PIP assessments will be delivered by two providers, Atos and Capita, from 10 June. Details of which provider covers your area can be found in the PIP Toolkit on the [DWP website](#).

Anyone wishing to make a new claim for PIP should telephone the New Claims line on 0800 917 2222. Full details of how to claim can be found on the [GOV.UK website](#).

There is also a separate PIP General Enquiries line - 0845 850 3322.

If a claimant is unable to deal with us over the telephone, and they do not have someone to help them make the initial claims call, they can ask us to post a form to them that gives the basic information needed to make a PIP claim.

Stocks of clerical claim forms are not available to order.

Please make sure you are using the latest version of the DWP041 PIP leaflet and that you are no longer issuing the DLA1 Adult or DLA1 A Adult forms. Giving someone a DLA claim form will delay the claim. Our [checklist](#) explains some simple steps your organisation can take to help you offer the best advice. Your local [DWP Partner Manager](#) can also provide organisations with support and information about PIP.

DWP has published a research report detailing how the feedback from disabled people and those who represent them has helped to shape the way that PIP is designed. You can find the full report on the [DWP website](#).

# Dragons' Den star backs scheme for budding entrepreneurs

Dragons' Den star Levi Roots has teamed up with Jobcentre Plus to encourage jobseekers to use the Government's New Enterprise Allowance scheme to help set up their own businesses.

The [New Enterprise Allowance](#) gives jobseekers access to expert business mentoring and a financial package worth up to £2,274, to help them get started.

Levi, the south London entrepreneur behind the Reggae Reggae Sauces, is passionate about the benefits of self-employment and is calling on jobseekers to consider setting up their own businesses.

He said: "Being your own boss is great – it can be really hard work, but it's well worth it, so I'd encourage jobseekers to ask their Jobcentre Plus adviser about the [New Enterprise Allowance](#). It's a great scheme that offers expert mentoring and cash to support you while you're starting up."

Levi launched his business with the backing of Peter Jones from Dragons' Den, and is now sharing his own experience by mentoring one lucky entrepreneur whose business was started with the help of the New Enterprise Allowance.

Levi agreed to mentor 28-year-old Dean Clarke because he was so impressed by his story.

Dean, from Brixton, had always dreamed about starting his own business but as a



young man, with no business experience, he was not sure where to start. That was until he spoke to his Jobcentre Plus adviser who told him about the New Enterprise Allowance.

In February this year Dean launched a business selling custom designed skateboards and clothing 'r3v3r3nt' – a brand for which he has global ambitions.

Minister for Employment Mark Hoban said:

"Many people want to look after themselves and their families by starting their own business."

"We have helped nearly 20,000 budding entrepreneurs to do just that through the New Enterprise Allowance. I want to see many more unemployed people start a business of their own."



For more information about New Enterprise Allowance visit [www.dwp.gov.uk/nea](http://www.dwp.gov.uk/nea)

# Direct Payment demonstration projects extended

The Universal Credit direct payment demonstration projects will be extended for a further six months.

The projects will now run until the end of the year and will help to further develop the support needed for social housing tenants who are moving onto Universal Credit.

It will also allow DWP to continue to investigate a range of different elements of direct payments that could help to provide protection for landlords and tenants if rent arrears build up. These include:

- levels of support tenants may need to start direct payments, such as advice on managing personal finances and budgeting
- the exemptions that need to be in place for direct payments
- payment switch-backs to the landlord if a tenant falls into arrears
- the support needed to help tenants to pay back their arrears and to potentially return to direct payments
- early intervention switch-backs before arrears reach trigger points

Latest figures from the Demonstration Projects show an average rent collection rate of 94%.

Some 6,168 tenants have received direct payments, the total level of rent charged stood at £19,204,022 and an increase in the average rent collection rate to 94% – with levels of rent payment rates on the projects varying from 91% to 97%.

The six direct payment demonstration projects are:

- Dunedin Canmore Housing Association in Edinburgh, in association with Edinburgh City Council
- Oxford City Council and Oxford Citizens, (part of the) Greensquare Group, Southern England
- Shropshire Unitary County Council and Bromford Group, Sanctuary Housing and The Wrekin Housing Trust, West Midlands
- Southwark Council and Family Mosaic, London
- Torfaen County Borough Council and Bron Afon Community Housing and Charter Housing, Wales
- Wakefield Council and Wakefield and District Housing, West Yorkshire

Findings from the six areas covering the first nine payments of housing benefit directly to tenants are available on the [DWP corporate website](#).

# Improvements to the Work Capability Assessment

DWP continues to roll out improvements to the Work Capability Assessment (WCA) recommended by Professor Malcolm Harrington.

The improvements were recommended by Professor Malcolm Harrington in his third and final review of the assessment in November 2012.

In it he said: “There is still some way to go but I am confident that significant and lasting improvements are coming and that DWP and my successor will see the job completed.”

That successor is Dr Paul Litchfield – Chief Medical Officer and Director of Health, Safety and Wellbeing for BT. He will continue to deliver Professor Harrington’s recommendations and to oversee the outcome of the fourth review.

DWP recognises that the WCA did not work as well as it should in the early years. That is why the Government made a commitment in the Welfare Reform Act 2007 to independently review the operation of the WCA.

DWP is making good progress in delivering over 50 recommendations from Professor Harrington’s three reviews.

These include:

- Improving how we communicate with and explain the WCA process to claimants

- Introducing the Quality Assessment Framework to improve WCA decisions
- Providing personalised summary statements and mental function champions to improve face-to-face assessments
- Developing and testing an alternative set of descriptors covering mental function
- Improving the way in which people who are awaiting/receiving treatment for or recovering from cancer are assessed

The percentage of people now entitled to Employment and Support Allowance is at its highest, with over half of those who complete an assessment being eligible for the benefit.

The percentage of people getting long-term unconditional support has also nearly tripled in two years.

[Professor Harrington’s Year One review](#)

[Professor Harrington’s Year Two review](#)

[Professor Harrington’s Year Three review](#)

# Appeals process changes

## The disputes and appeals process has changed.

The new system was brought in alongside the new benefits, Personal Independence Payment and Universal Credit, when they were introduced in April 2013.

The aim is to give claimants and DWP a chance to resolve issues about benefit awards without the need for an appeal.

It will also improve customer service for claimants and clients as it is in their interest if disputes can be settled as early as possible.

The new elements are:

- **Mandatory Reconsideration** – if claimants are unhappy with a decision about a benefit award, they will now have to discuss it with DWP before appealing to a tribunal. This gives claimants a chance to let DWP know if their circumstances have changed while DWP has the chance to explain its decision.
- **Direct lodgement** – if a claimant still wishes to appeal after the mandatory reconsideration they must send their appeal directly to Her Majesty's Courts and Tribunal Service.
- **Time limits for appeal responses** – DWP has agreed to respond to benefit cases within 28 calendar days and to child maintenance cases within 42 calendar days.

The early experiences from the new appeal process will be used to inform the roll-out of the changes to child maintenance cases and all other benefits

administered by DWP which will begin from 28 October 2013.

The support of customer representatives and advisory groups will be crucial to the success of the reforms. We are therefore making every effort to ensure that you have all the information you need to support people through the changes.

More information is available from the [DWP Corporate Website](#).

If you have any questions which are not answered in the lines to take, or any feedback on existing communications products, please contact [pipandbenefitsdelivery.programmecomunicationsteam@dwp.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:pipandbenefitsdelivery.programmecomunicationsteam@dwp.gsi.gov.uk)

An [information pack](#) for external stakeholders is now available on the DWP website. Here you can also find detailed [lines to take](#) for customer representative groups.

We have already written to customer representative groups about the changes but we will send you more details about how they will operate in practice as we approach the autumn changes.

Local Jobcentre Plus contacts have also been given information about the changes, and can help to answer any questions you may have. We will also continue to provide regular updates through Touchbase and the DWP Stakeholder Bulletin.

# New Bereavement Support Payment

## A new Bereavement Support Payment will be introduced with The Pensions Bill which will transform the current Bereavement Benefit system.

We are shifting the focus of bereavement benefits, to provide a short-term intervention, to help people deal with the immediate costs that arise when a spouse or civil partner dies.

It will be paid as a lump sum with further instalments over the course of a year to avoid the risks associated with making a large lump sum payment.

This period is not intended to reflect the time someone needs to 'recover', but instead to provide a buffer for the immediate financial impact of bereavement. Payments will be disregarded from Universal Credit and the Benefit Cap for 12 months.

The new system will target bereavement benefits so that greater support is given in the period which, research tells us, is particularly challenging financially.

Ongoing support is also provided through other parts of the welfare system, such as Universal Credit, and contributory Jobseeker's Allowance and Employment and Support Allowance, depending on people's circumstances.

The changes take account of the realities of working-age widowhood in the 21st century and underline the Government's ongoing commitment to providing financial support for people when they need it most.



<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-work-pensions/series/pensions-bill>